

Journal of the Philosophy of History

Trust and Truth: Testimony and the Epistemic Validity of Historical Writings

Guest Editor: Verónica Tozzi

The issue of evaluating the truth of historical interpretations of the past, based on the analysis of the available evidence, has been a significant concern for both historians, historical theorists, and philosophers of history since the 19th century. While one of the central problems in historical research lies in assessing the reliability of eyewitness testimonies, it is notable that, in an effort to emphasize the epistemic autonomy of the historian and reject appeals to authority.

Since the second half of the 20th century, history, philosophy of history, and historical theory have been attentive to the various challenges that have emerged from different fields, pointing out the limitations of relying on strictly epistemic considerations to evaluate the results of academic historical research. In particular, the presumed neutrality and objectivity of this approach has been criticized.

The challenges arising from the new philosophy of history, narrativism, memory studies, feminism, postcolonial studies, to name a few, call for a broader perspective in order to incorporate new voices and testimonies of subalternized subjects in the representations of the past. Thus, we are witnessing proposals to pay attention to these voices either in terms of a non-naïve sense of aesthetics or in ethical and moral terms. These expansions have sometimes been interpreted negatively, as promoting ideological or linguistic reductionism, or positively, as enabling a sincere ethical turn. In all cases, they relegate the relevance of epistemology in the acceptance of representations of the past.

Nevertheless, it cannot be overlooked that the principal disputes in academia and in the public sphere regarding the acceptability of narratives about the past continue to be formulated in terms of epistemic values, that is, truth in relation to the facts, the evidence, or reality itself (as can be seen in post-truth and fake news phenomena). In all these discussions, one can detect the continued circulation of certain notions of truth, science, facts, evidence, and epistemology, that were criticized during the 20th century. **New approaches to the topic explore the value of 'trust' and interpersonal and community relationships for the production and acceptance of knowledge in general, and knowledge of the past in particular.**

The following question may help to sharpen these points: In what way could recent approaches in the field of social epistemology, feminist epistemologies, epistemology of

testimony, and virtue epistemology contribute to a reconsideration of the role of epistemic evaluation in disputes over the past?

Papers (c.8,000 words) are to be submitted on **May 1st 2026**. Papers will be reviewed by the editor of the special issue and at least one external reviewer. The final revised papers are due **September 1st 2026**. Guidelines can be found on the journal's webpage. The special issue will be edited by Verónica Tozzi (veronicatorzzi@gmail.com).

Potential contributors are invited to send abstracts of up to 500 words emailed as an attachment by **November 1st 2025** to Verónica Tozzi (veronicatorzzi@gmail.com). Authors will be notified of decisions within one month of this deadline.

Below is a suggested list of possible topics that can be addressed either in conceptual terms, or with reference to specific cases, or as an opportunity to revisit classical thinkers on the notions of evidence, truth, trust, and testimony from contemporary perspectives.

Suggestions for papers might include (but are not limited to):

- The analogy between the historian, the judge, and the detective in the evaluation of evidence
- Limits of epistemic concerns in writing about “limit events” such as the Holocaust
- New subjects and emerging voices: their testimonial role in the construction of historical interpretations
- Epistemic injustice
- The role of the other's word in the generation of true beliefs about the past
- Distribution of roles and interaction between experts and laypeople in the production of historical knowledge: who are the trustworthy subjects?
- Current challenges to the authority of academic history: analysis from new social epistemologies and their contribution to historiography
- Co-production of historical knowledge: interaction between academia and activism for the production of new interpretations of the past